



Patient Education Newsletter



Fall 2002

Welcome to the first issue of the VISN 12 Patient Education Newsletter!

The newsletter has no name yet, because we want YOU, our veteran readers to name it! Write your ideas for a name on the survey in the middle of the newsletter. Place it in the marked box at your Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), clinic, or hospital.

The newsletter is available to all veterans in VISN 12. Each issue will contain information on your health. Nurses, doctors, and other members of the health care team will write articles on how to stay healthy and how to improve your health. It will be published about four times a year.

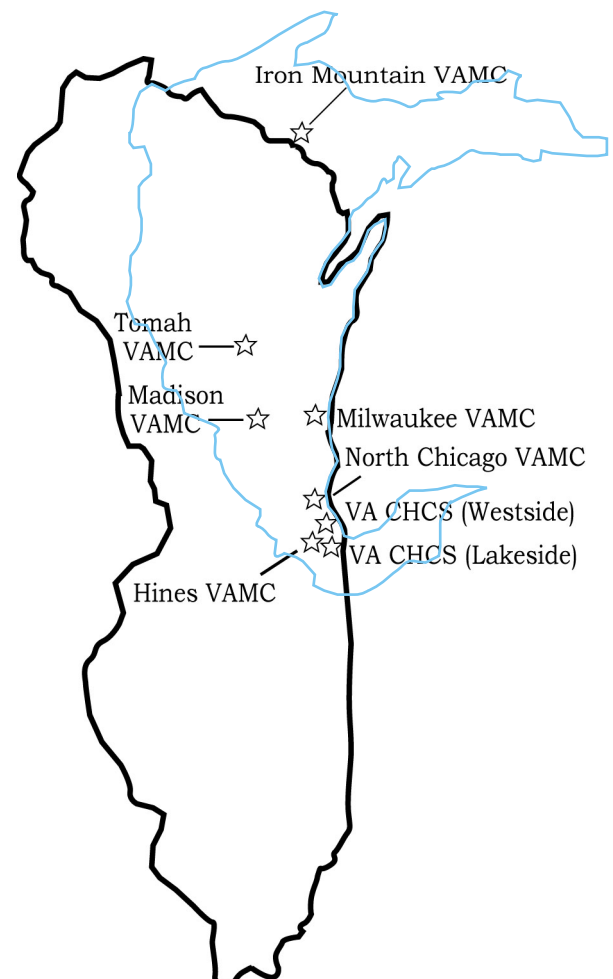
You have a say as to what articles will be in the newsletter. Please take the time to complete the survey on the next page of this newsletter. Place the completed survey in the marked box at your Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), clinic, or hospital.

VISN 12 spans from Northern Michigan, throughout most of Wisconsin and south to the Chicago-land area. VISN 12 consists of these **seven hospitals**:

- Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
- Iron Mountain VA Medical Center
- Williams S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital (Madison)
- Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center (Milwaukee)
- North Chicago VA Medical Center
- Tomah VA Medical Center
- VA Chicago Health Care System- Lakeside and Westside Divisions

VISN 12 also has a total of **30 CBOCs**.

The newsletter idea started at Hines VA Hospital. John Cunningham, RN, Staff Nurse at the Aurora Clinic, wrote one for the Aurora Clinic in March 1999. The idea grew into newsletters for all of the CBOCs and the Outpatient Clinics at Hines.



The newsletter idea progressed further when Ann Doubek, RN, Clinical Nurse Manager, Hines Home Based Primary Care, started the Home Care News. Beginning in Fall 1999, the newsletter was sent to all home care patients in VISN 12. Home Care News featured articles from the Home Care Directors for homebound patients and their caregivers.

Hats off to John and Ann! Look at how far your ideas have come! The VISN 12 Patient Education Committee looks forward to providing you with information you want, focusing on your health. Sit back, relax, and enjoy YOUR newsletter!

Name Your Newsletter!!

Do you have an idea for the name or title of the VISN 12 Patient Education newsletter? Write down your idea and drop it in the marked box or mail to this column, care of the Senior Editor, Kathleen Ford, (152), Hines VA Hospital, 5th Avenue & Roosevelt Road, Hines, IL 60141.

Who knows, your catchy name may be on the next newsletter and seen by Vets throughout the VISN!

Name of Newsletter:

Future Articles

What would you like to read about in future newsletters? Jot down your ideas and drop the survey (on page 6 of this newsletter) in the marked box within your facility or mail to this column, care of the Senior Editor, Kathleen Ford, (152), Hines VA Hospital, 5th Avenue & Roosevelt Road, Hines, IL 60141.

HOME CARE

OR N E R

In Need of a Care Giver Where Can You Get Help?

by Jason Mask, LCSW;
Hines VA Hospital

by the Coordinator of the Home Care Program

You may be elderly and frail or disabled due to a chronic illness, stroke, or spinal cord injury. Often, you may need help to take care of yourself. In the past, you may have gotten help from your spouse, son, daughter, or a good friend. They may not be able to do this anymore. You may require more help than they can provide. Or you may simply need someone to help them with your care. Where do you go for help?

The VA Home Care programs can help you in several ways. We can refer you to a community nursing agency for skilled care. There, skilled care treatments would be provided, like changing bandages on a wound, doing bowel and bladder care, or administering special medicines. Medicare may pay these services if you are receiving Medicare insurance or the VA may pay it through the VA's Fee Basis program. You need to meet the Fee Basis eligibility requirements for the VA to pay for these services.

We can refer you to a community homemaker/home health aide agency. These places provide help in bathing, dressing yourself, preparing meals, cleaning your home, etc. The state's Department on Aging may pay these services, if you meet the state's financial eligibility criteria. The VA, through the VA's Homemaker/Home Health Aide program, may pay them. They may have to be paid by you, either in full or in part, depending on your income. We can also provide nursing home care. If you are no longer able to be cared for at home, you may be eligible to have Medicare pay for a nursing home for a brief stay. You may be able to qualify for the state to pay through the state's Medicaid program. Or you may be eligible to have the VA pay for care for a limited period of time.

If you need help in any of these ways, please contact your local VA Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) programs at one of the following numbers:

Hines HBPC	708-202-2051
Joliet HBPC	815-741-4746
Hines Spinal Cord Injury Home Care	708-202-2056
Milwaukee HBPC (RECC)	414-384-2000, ext. 42121
Milwaukee Spinal Cord Injury Home Care	414-384-2000, ext. 47229
North Chicago HBPC	847-578-3784
VA Chicago HBPC, Westside Division	312-569-7592
VA Chicago HBPC, Lakeside Division	312-569-7592

Osteoporosis

Not Just a Woman's Concern

Pamela Terlouw, RN, BSN

Staff Nurse, Subspecialty Medicine Clinics, Hines VA Hospital

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis (pronounced OS-tea-oh-po-ROH-sis) is a disease that weakens and thins bones so they can easily break. It has often been called “the silent disease” because you may not notice any symptoms in the early stages. During your lifetime new bone grows to replace lost bone. As you age, the amount of bone mass lost becomes greater than bone being formed. This puts you more at risk for this disease.

Do both men and women get this?

Yes, both men and women can get this disease. About 25 million Americans are affected — 80% are women and the rest are men. Fewer men get osteoporosis because they start out with heavier bone mass. Also, women lose bone faster due to hormone changes.

What are the risk factors?

Osteoporosis can strike at any age, but your risk increases as you get older. You are more likely to develop this disease if you have any of the following risk factors:

- Family history of this disease
- History of broken bones
- A thin or small build or body frame
- Caucasian or Asian ethnic background (yet it can affect all backgrounds)
- Are female, especially if you are over 45 years and in menopause
- Have a low calcium intake
- Smoke cigarettes
- Drink large amounts of caffeine or alcohol
- Drink large amounts of soft drinks
- Don't exercise
- Take certain medicines (ask your doctor if you are taking any of them)
- Have a chronic illness like diabetes or kidney disease

How will I know if I have it?

Most people don't know they have osteoporosis until they have broken a bone. Other warning signs could be back pain, loss of height or an upper back that is curved. It can sometimes be seen on an x-ray. One of the most common tests is a bone density test called a DEXA scan. This test can measure the health of your bones.

What can I do to prevent it?

There are many things you can do to lower your risk of getting this disease. Here are some steps you should take to keep your bones healthy.

- Get enough calcium — See the box below for foods high in calcium. If you need to take a calcium tablet, talk to your doctor about which one is right for you. Most adults need 1000 mg to 1500 mg of calcium each day.
- Be active: weight-bearing exercises, like walking, biking, or hiking are the best.
- Don't smoke.
- Drink less caffeine and/or alcohol.
- Drink less soft drinks-calcium fortified juices are a good substitute.
- Avoid stress-your body requires more calcium during stressful times.
- Have regular check-ups.

How is it treated?

There are a variety of medicines that can slow bone loss or build up bone. For women, there are hormones that can be used to replace ones lost. Work with your doctor to plan your treatment.

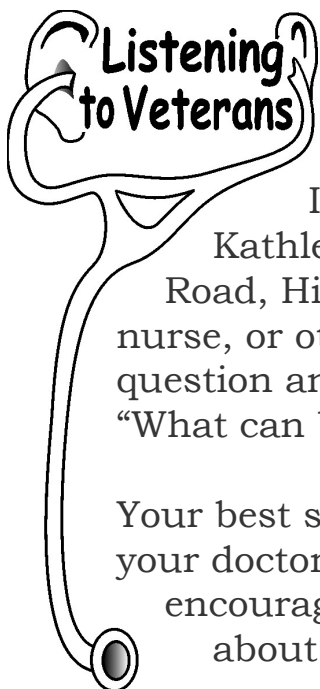
What else can I do?

People with weak bones need to be careful to avoid falling. Keep your home free of tripping hazards like cords or rugs and wear sturdy, nonskid, low-heeled shoes.

Protect yourself and don't let this disease keep you from being healthy and safe!

Foods High in Calcium

Milk	Calcium fortified juices	Rhubarb
Powdered milk	Canned salmon, with bones	Kale
Cheese	Canned sardines, with bones	Collard greens
Yogurt or Tofu	Vanilla pudding	Refried beans
Custard	Turnip greens	Pumpkin pie



Ask An Expert

Is there a **general** health question you would like answered?

If so, you can write to this column, care of the Senior Editor, Kathleen Ford, (152), Hines VA Hospital, 5th Avenue & Roosevelt Road, Hines, IL 60141. Your questions will be answered by a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider. Remember, it must be a general question and not one specific to your unique situation. For example, "What can be done to lower cholesterol?"

Your best source for information on your health will always be your doctor or health care provider. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to talk to your health care provider and ask questions about your health concerns.

Did you know that there is a web site
for Vets in VISN 12?

Log on at **www.vagreatlakes.org**

Department of Veterans Affairs
VISN 12

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Important Numbers for Your Health Care Facility:

Future Articles Survey

What would you like to read about in future newsletters?

Thanks for your input!